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AUGUST MEETING.

The Society held its stated monthly meeting this day, Thursday, Aug. 10, at eleven o'clock, A.M. ; the President in the chair.

The Librarian announced donations from the State of Vermont; the American Philosophical Society; the Chamber of Commerce of New York; the Massachusetts Bible Society; the Massachusetts Sabbath-school Society; the New-England Historic-Genealogical Society; the New-England Loyal Publication Society; the Proprietors of the Heraldic Journal; the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; John Appleton, M.D.; Mr. George Arnold; Messrs. Bartlett and Halliday; John F. Eliot, Esq.; Rev. William C. French; Col. Thomas W. Higginson; Clement H. Hill, Esq.; Hon. Samuel Hooper; Benjamin P. Johnson, Esq.; James Lenox, Esq.; J. H. Siddons, Esq.; Increase Sumner, Esq.; Rev. John A. Vinton; and from Messrs. W. G. Brooks, Green, Lawrence, and Winthrop, of the Society.

The Corresponding Secretary read a letter of acceptance from Samuel Eliot, Esq.

The President noticed the decease of Miss Elizabeth Belknap, — daughter of Dr. Belknap, the principal founder of this Society, — which took place on the 3d instant, at her residence in Dover Street, at the age of ninety-one years. He stated, that, in March, 1858, Miss Belknap authorized Mr. Ticknor to present to the Society, in her name, the principal part of the manuscripts, books, and pamphlets, relating to American

history, left by her father, the late Rev. Dr. Belknap. These are now bound in one hundred and fifty volumes, comprising six folio and forty-eight smaller volumes of manuscripts, and ninety-six of printed works, in which last division are many rare and valuable tracts. The manuscripts include a portion of the diary of Increase Mather, and that of Cotton Mather for six years; the autobiography of the Rev. Hugh Adams; the diary of Lawrence Hammond; Fitch's narrative relating to affairs in New Hampshire; autograph letters from Dr. Watts to Dr. Colman; and other interesting papers mentioned by Mr. Deane in his Report on the donation at that time. There are also in this collection thirty-four interleaved almanacs, from 1758 to 1798 inclusive.

In January, 1861, she presented, through Dr. Ellis, the letters from Dr. Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, Esq., commencing in 1779, and continued until March, 1798.

Mr. C. BROOKS also paid a brief tribute to the memory of Miss Belknap.

Mr. DEANE made the following remarks respecting a pamphlet then lying upon the table, presented by our Corresponding Member, Mr. Lenox of New York:—

Those of our members who are familiar with the bibliography of American history will remember the fact, that Columbus, on his return from his first voyage, addressed a letter from Lisbon—dated 14th March, 1493, the day before he arrived at Palos—to Rafael Sanchez, treasurer to Ferdinand and Isabella, giving an account of his great discovery; and that this letter was soon afterwards translated from the Spanish, in which it was written, into Latin,—the universal language of scholars of that day,—and published in a large number of editions. Mr. Lenox, in an interesting

bibliographical paper printed as an appendix to a translation of "Syllacius," in 1859, describes no less than six editions which appeared in that year (1493) in Latin. These little volumes are very precious in the eyes of the bibliographer, being the earliest memorial extant relating to the history of the discovery of America. But no copy of this letter to Sanchez, in the *original Spanish*, is known to be in existence, either in print or in manuscript. It was first translated from the *Latin* into *English* in 1816, and published in the "Edinburgh Review," vol. xxvii. It has since been translated anew by Mr. Major, in a volume of "Columbus's Letters," published by the Hakluyt Society, in 1847.

In the valuable collection of documents published by Navarrete in 1825, we learned for the first time that there was extant another letter of Columbus, announcing his great discovery, written about the time he wrote the one just described; and addressed to *Luis de Santangel*, secretary and steward of the Royal Household. This was discovered in the archives of Simancas, in manuscript, and in the original Spanish; and was published by Navarrette. These two letters — to *Sanchez* and to *Santangel* — are nearly the same in substance; but no contemporaneously *printed* copy of that to *Santangel* was known to exist until the recent discovery of a copy, described by Mr. Lenox in the pamphlet which now lies upon the table. (This account by Mr. Lenox had been previously communicated to the "Historical Magazine" for September, 1864.)

By this it appears that this printed copy was discovered in the archives of the Ambrosian Library, at Milan. It belongs to a collection of books and manuscripts bequeathed to that library, about twelve years ago, by the Baron Pietro Custodi, a Milanese historian and political economist. This unique little volume is described as being in very good condition, with broad margins. The whole leaf measures twenty *centimetres* high by fourteen broad (about eight inches by

five-and-a-half; what we call a small quarto). Mr. Lenox furnishes in his pamphlet *fac-similes* of the commencement and the close of the letter.

There is no place or name of printer in the book; but Mr. Lenox thinks it was probably printed in Spain, in 1493, and before any of the Latin editions of the letter to Sanchez had been issued. The letter bears date "February 15th," off the Azores. A postscript is dated "March 4th," the day Columbus put into Lisbon in a storm.

It may be mentioned, that this letter to Santangel was translated into English by Mr. Samuel Kettell, of Boston, and published here, in 1827, in a volume containing other papers relating to the first voyage of Columbus, from Navarrete's great work.

Dr. PALMER read the following paper on longevity:—

It has been asserted recently by some English writers, that there is no positive proof that any person has lived in modern times to the age of one hundred years. We often see reported in the papers the deaths of persons at the age of one hundred years and upwards. But there is not unfrequently some doubt as to the time of birth of these old people. I recollect that a few years since there was announced in the "Transcript" the death of a lady, in Boston, at the age of one hundred and seven years. The next day, or in a short time afterwards, a communication appeared in the same paper, in which the writer proved by authentic records, that the lady at the time of her death was only about ninety years old. I speak from recollection, not having made any memoranda of the case. I have never known, nor do I remember to have heard of, any wealthy person who lived to enjoy his riches a century. It has been stated that none of the English nobility ever attained to the age of one hundred years. The reason of this might, perhaps, be accounted for in the fact that they

are in affluent circumstances, and, as it is vulgarly termed, live faster than those people who earn their bread by the sweat of the brow.

A memorandum of a writer, under the signature of "M. S. R.," was published in London "Notes and Queries," vol. ix. second series, page 438, a few years since, in which he gives a list of centenarians who belonged to the British army, from which I extract the following:—

"John Effingham was born in Penryn, and died there in February, 1757, aged one hundred and forty-four years. In the revolution of James II. he was pressed, and served under Lord Feversham, then commander-in-chief. On William III. making his descent, he fought under Schomberg at the Boyne,—his intrepidity in action there gaining him the rank of corporal. Under Marlborough, he was at the battle of Blenheim, and lost one eye and most of his teeth by the bursting of a musket. In the reign of George I. he was discharged; and, returning to Penryn, worked as a laborer. When young, he never drank spirituous liquors. He used constant exercise, seldom ate meat, and walked ten miles about a week before his death.

"James Macdonald died near Cork, August, 1760, aged one hundred and seventeen years. His height was seven feet six inches. He enlisted as a grenadier in 1685, and served in that rank till the breaking out of the rebellion. In 1716, he returned to his native country, where he toiled as a laborer till within three years of his decease. When in health, he could eat four pounds of solid meat at a meal, and drink in proportion strong liquor, without feeling its effects. His limbs were prodigious. A lady's bracelet might have served one of his enormous fingers for a ring.

"John Craig died at Kilmarnock, May, 1793, aged one hundred and eleven years. He served in the North-British dragoons, and was at the battle of Sheriffmuir, in 1715. He was never married, and never had any sickness.

"John Durham died at Sunnyside, Durham, March, 1776, aged one hundred and one years. He had been in the army, and mounted guard at Whitehall, in 1714.

"John Hastie died in Edinburgh, about 1798, aged one hundred years. He was fifty years in the service, and fought at Sheriffmuir, in 1715.

“John Nesbit died at Dunge, in Scotland, about September, 1800, aged one hundred and seven years. He served at the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, in 1747.

“Robert Swiffield, a pensioner, died at Chelsea Hospital, 30th August, 1805, aged one hundred and five years.

“James Lack died at Hackney, 31st October, 1807, aged one hundred and five years. During the reigns of George I. and II., he fought in the German wars. He was also at the siege of Quebec, and attended Wolfe in his last moments.

“John Stewart died at Aberfeldie, in 1808, aged one hundred and eleven years. At the age of eighteen he joined the Pretender, and was present at Sheriffmuir, in 1715. In 1745 he again joined the standard of the Stuart, and fought at Falkirk and Preston Pans. He had *eight* wives, by all of whom, except the last, he had several children. Whiskey, of which he was very fond and drank to excess, it is believed, *shortened* his days.

“John Cowie died at Crimond, 27th February, 1811, aged one hundred and eight years. In his youth he enlisted into the army, and, after some war service, was discharged as worn out, in 1739. In 1745 he was in arms again, and present at Culloden. When somewhat above seventy, he married; and, his wife having brought him some money, he resigned the office he then filled of parish bell-man.

“Daniel McKinnon died at Falkirk, 2d April, 1813, in his one hundred and third year. He was born in the Isle of Skye, and passed his early life in the army. He was thrice married; and, when about ninety, his last wife brought him a thumping boy, of which the old man was excessively proud.

“David Ferguson died at Dunkirk, 6th August, 1818, aged one hundred and twenty-four years. He was born at Netherud, in the parish of Kirkud, and was the youngest of fifteen children. He was present at the battle of Sheriffmuir, in 1715.

“Patrick Grant died in Braemar, 11th February, 1824, aged one hundred and thirteen years. He fought at Falkirk and Culloden, and also in the English raid under the Pretender.

“Arthur Johnson died at Drumlough, county Down, 14th April, 1832, aged one hundred and six years. He served in most of the battles and sieges in America.

“John Henderson died at Kilmainham about April, 1836, aged one hundred and five years. He fought at Culloden, at the sieges of Quebec and the Havana; also at the battle of Bunker Hill.

"Thomas Plumb died at Whitechapel, 25th August, 1832, aged one hundred and eight years. He was a native of North America; and, when young, was the servant of a surgeon in the army. He afterwards joined a loyal corps of engineers formed in America, and was present at the battle of Bunker Hill and several other battles, till taken prisoner.

"George Fletcher died at Poplar, 2d March, 1855, aged one hundred and eight years. After following the occupation of a farmer for twenty-one years, he joined the army, in which he served twenty-six years; and was present at Bunker Hill, and also in the Egyptian campaigns of 1801."

Another correspondent, under the signature of "J. R., M.D.," vol. x. second series, page 15, in reference to this communication, says:—

"The possible duration of life in any living creature is not merely a curious but an important problem, in relation to man especially, and has engaged the attention of countless philosophers down to Walker the Original, who is satisfied that men might prolong their existence indefinitely; while Goethe, by another process, came to the conclusion that nobody died till he himself willed it. Upon either of these principles, we may imagine the long lists of old old-people, which have appeared in your pages, probable. But, some way or other, a stern inquirer into evidence, one who wants proofs, is always doomed to disappointment; and, without being quite positive, I have very serious doubts whether there is one instance of any human being having completed his hundredth year in modern times.

"It is singular enough that most of the centenarians recorded hitherto have been Irish, Scotch, or Negroes, always in the lower classes of society, and where a register of birth is hardly to be looked for; and yet, without this, the evidence breaks down at once. The nobility and gentry, where these matters are more carefully watched, don't afford a single instance; not a case occurs in the insurance-office registers, though these include a more miscellaneous list, and, *a priori* we might suppose, more likely to embrace long-lived individuals. According to "M. S. R.," no less than four persons who were at the battle of Sheriffmuir reached the age of one hundred, one hundred and eleven, one hundred and eleven, and one hundred and twenty-four, respectively; but we want the birth registers and the identification of the parties.

“May I hint to your correspondents, that, in these matters, neither assertions, nor even convictions, are of any avail; and that all such lists show only time wasted, and, I may say, Mr. Editor, your valuable paper and ink thrown away, and your still more valuable space occupied with matter of no possible use to any one? Take the first name in ‘M. S. R.’s’ roll, — John Effingham. He must have been born in 1613; was made a corporal at the battle of the Boyne when seventy-seven, — rather slow promotion; was wounded at Blenheim when ninety-one; and got his discharge in the reign of George I., — year not stated; but, if on the day of his accession, at the age of one hundred and one. Now, I am not going to deny the possibility of all or any of these statements; but, surely, I should want some better evidence than the ‘Public Advertiser’ of Feb. 18, 1757, in which month he is said to have died.

“We now and then find, in the obituaries of our own periodicals, notices of these deaths at or over one hundred; and I am sure that your correspondents, who might have a chance of really sifting these statements, would be conferring a benefit upon your readers by giving them the result of a detailed and trustworthy examination. It must, however, be borne in mind, that the child has been mistaken for the parent; and that two children have been named alike, — the elder dying, and the younger taking the additional years, and getting credit of the prior registers.”

My attention was called to this subject by a letter I received from Hon. Edward Kent, of Bangor, formerly Governor of Maine. He writes as follows: —

MY DEAR SIR, — I see that some of the English writers and speculators in the matter of longevity assert that there is no well-authenticated case of any person who has actually lived beyond one hundred years. You, as the necrologist, have doubtless noticed this singular doubt. Can you and Friend Sibley — one or both — produce the proof? Is there not sufficient evidence in the case of Ezra Green? (H. C. 1765;) he lived eighty-two years after his graduation. Judge T. Farrar (1767) lived eighty-two years; Dr. Holyoke (1746) lived eighty-three years. There are probably other cases nearly the same. Now, is there not a record at the College, in some or all of these cases, of the age of the aforesaid graduates when they entered? We all know that the men I have named did live beyond a century. The point is to prove it by records, — town, parish, state, college, or family records.

Dr. Holyoke was the son of President Holyoke; and, I should think, in his case there must be some certain record. The denial of the fact of the existence of any centenarian on this earth, in modern times, is so absurd that one naturally desires to have the proof of the fact. I think it belongs to you, aided by the guardian of the library at Cambridge, to look into this matter, and to establish the truth of the catalogue. You see, these men must all have been not over eighteen years old when they were graduated,—if they died the year stated in the catalogue. The second fact, after that of the time of birth, is the time of the death. This, of course, is easily proved in all these cases.

We buried, as you know, here at Bangor, a few years since, Rev. John Sawyer, a graduate of Dartmouth. He was undoubtedly at least one hundred and three years old. I heard him preach the day he was one hundred years old. But I do not know that there are here any records to prove the fact to the satisfaction of these gentile unbelievers. The race cannot afford to be thus docked,—cut down,—denied to every one the chance of living one hundred years. I pray you, therefore, to look out this matter *sine mora*. Call on Dr. Shurtleff to look after these heretical doubters, and to put a stop to this direct assault of John Bull on the whole human family.

Yours truly,

EDWARD KENT.

It is going too far, I think, to say, that no one ever completed his hundredth year in modern times. Many of those who have been reported to have attained to an extraordinary old age, probably did not know, or have any record of, the date of their birth. I recollect an instance, published in the papers at the time, when the last census of the United States was taken. A census-taker in Albany called at a house in that city occupied by an Irish woman and her daughter. He took down their names, and then asked the woman how old she was. She replied that she was thirty. He then asked her what was the age of her daughter. She said her daughter was twenty-five. He told her that could not be correct. "Well," said she, "your honor knows better than I do." He told her he would put down her age sixty, and that he would put her daughter down thirty. Well, she said, she thought that would be about right.

We have had four centenarians, graduates of Harvard Col-

lege; that is, if the dates of their births were recorded correctly. The first was Dr. Edward Augustus Holyoke, who graduated in 1746. He was born in Marblehead, 1st August, 1728, and died in Salem, 31st March, 1829, aged one hundred years and seven months.

The next was Samson Salter Blowers, who graduated in 1763. He was born in Boston, 22d March, 1742; was a refugee at the time of the American Revolution, and died in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 25th October, 1842, aged one hundred years, seven months, and three days.

The third was Dr. Ezra Green, who graduated in 1765. He was born in Malden, 17th June, 1746, and died in Dover, N.H., 25th July, 1847, aged one hundred and one years, one month, and eight days.

The fourth was Hon. Timothy Farrar, who graduated in 1767. He was born in Lincoln, 11th July, 1747, and died in Hollis, N.H., 21st February, 1849, aged one hundred and one years, seven months, and ten days.

I obtained the dates of the births of these four graduates from the college records, and presume they are correct. They therefore disprove the statement that no individual has completed his hundredth year in modern times.

Dr. WEBB read some letters which he had received from aged persons to whom he had addressed inquiries relative to the origin of the "buff and blue" uniform of the Revolution, and whether there were any *sobriquet* by which Washington was known among the soldiers. The letters, generally, gave but little satisfaction relative to the information sought for; but one of the aged writers, a Mr. Snyder, stated that among the soldiery Washington was known by the appellation of the "Sly Fox."

In connection with the subject of the dispersion of manuscripts, occasioned by the late Rebellion, Mr.

WATERSTON spoke of an early letter of Washington which he had seen; it having been recently picked up in the streets of Richmond. The letter was dated in 1749, and contained on one page a plan of a tract of land and of a river, which had been surveyed by Washington. Mr. Waterston expressed the opinion that all such papers should ultimately be restored to the libraries to which they had belonged.

Mr. DEANE spoke of a copy of the original Report of Mason & Dixon, the surveyors of the line between the States of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, 1763-1768. It was in the possession of the managers of the Sanitary Fair, recently held in Philadelphia, — having been given to them by a collector of manuscripts who had bought it at the sale of the library of the late E. D. Ingraham, of Philadelphia. It is supposed that there were at least two copies of this Report. One of these is now in the archives of Maryland; and this copy, it is thought, may have once belonged to Pennsylvania.*

Mr. R. FROTHINGHAM asked permission to copy a passage relative to General Warren, from Dr. Pierce's manuscript diary; and leave was granted under the rules.

* Mr. Porter C. Bliss, while on a visit to Nova Scotia in 1860, discovered, in the possession of a gentleman residing there, a full journal kept by Mason, in his own handwriting, during the whole period of his residence in this country; embracing statistical details of their surveys, astronomical observations, field notes, &c. The first entry was made Nov. 15, 1763, indicating it as the day he arrived at Philadelphia from England; and the last entry, Sept. 9, 1768, the day he sailed for England. The manuscript consists of about five quires of paper, or between four and five hundred pages. As this was Mason's private journal, it must have been taken by him to England. It subsequently recrossed the ocean to the British Provinces. (See "Historical Magazine" for July, 1861, pp. 199-202.)